

**A NOTE ON THE IDENTITY OF THE MADAGASCAN
ORCHID *AERANTHES CAUDATA* ROLFE.**

by P. J. CRIBB

***Aeranthès caudata* Rolfe**

Bull. Misc. Inf. Kew 1901 : 149 (1901).

— *Aeranthès imerinensis* PERR., Not. Syst. 7 : 44 (1938).

Comparison of the type material of *A. caudata* and *A. imerinensis* has shown the two to be conspecific. H. PERRIER DE LA BATHIE (1941) separated the two species in his key to the genus *Aeranthès*. However, he did not see the type material of *A. caudata* but relied on ROLFE's description of the species in Kew Bulletin (1901). Unfortunately, this contains an error, the lateral sepals are said to be $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by 4 inches wide when the correct measurements are $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by $1\frac{1}{3}$ inch (4 lines) wide. Moreover, PERRIER misread ROLFE's description of the labellum which is 5 cm long including the acumen for, in his key, PERRIER states that in *A. caudata* the labellum is 5 cm long without the acumen.

With these errors recognised, the only remaining distinction between the two species lies in the relative length to breadth ratios of their respective labella. Even this distinction is of limited value as other flowers from the type specimen of *A. caudata* possess a broader labellum than that described, but quite comparable with that found in *A. imerinensis*.

Twenty collections¹ of *A. caudata* have been compared and the range of variation exhibited is shown in table 1. Variation exists in all the characters measured but the variation is essentially one of size and not shape. The variation in labellum size and shape is shown in figure 1. Even on a single inflorescence, flower size can vary considerably. A misleading impression of flower size can also arise because over two-thirds of each sepal and one half of each petal consist of a long filiform acumen which can easily break off. When tepal size excluding the acumen is considered the variation from collection to collection is considerably less.

A. caudata occurs in east central and north Madagascar but a recent collection (Kew accession number 028-71.00409) has been made on Grande Comore by Mrs Joyce STEWART. She collected plants growing on lower branches of forest trees above Boboni at 700 m altitude. A plant of

1. Collection numbers and localities are listed in the appendix.

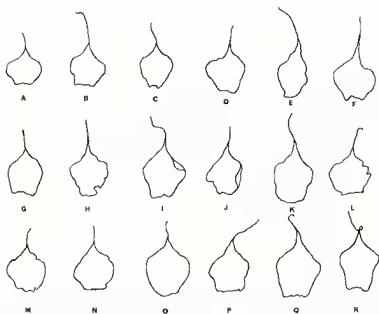


Fig. 1. — Variation in labellum shape and size in *A. caudata* Rolfe: A, *Perrier 18463*; B, *Perrier 16967*; C, *Perrier 17152*; D, *Bosser 19858*; E, *Glasnevin s.n.*; F, *Morat 3901*; G, *Stewart 919*; H, *Bosser 18975*; I, *Ursch 166*; J, *Perrier 17293*; K, *Glasnevin s.n.*; L, *Bosser 17850*; M, N, *Perrier 18404*; O, *Stewart 919*; P, *Peyrat s.n.*; Q, *Bosser s.n.*; R, *Masson 483*; (P - R drawn from flowers preserved in spirit) All $\times 2/3$

TABLE 1. — VARIATION IN EIGHT CHARACTERS IN *A. CAUDATA*

CHARACTER		RANGE OF VARIATION (cms.)	
		with acumen	without acumen
petal	length	2.5-5.0	1.0-1.8
	breadth	0.6-1.0	
dorsal sepal	length	3.3-9.0	1.5-2.5
	breadth	0.6-1.0	
lateral sepal	length	3.0-9.0	1.5-2.5
	breadth	0.6-1.1	
labellum	length	2.0-3.7	1.5-2.5
	breadth	1.0-1.8	
column	length	0.3-0.5	
	spur	0.7-1.2	
bract	length	0.6-1.2	
	leaf	9.0-34.0	
	breadth	1.2-2.4	

this collection has been grown at Kew; there it has flowered well and has been illustrated recently in Curtis's Botanical Magazine (1975). Apart from an unidentified species collected by BOIVIN on Anjouan (See PERRIER, 1941), this was the first record of the genus *Aeranthès* from the Comoro Islands.

A. caudata may be easily distinguished from other *Aeranthès* species by its short cylindrical spur, sepals with filiform acumens to 9 cm long, obtrullate lip and ligulate leaves which have a marked unequally bilobed apex.

COLLECTIONS SEEN IN STUDY IN PARIS HERBARIUM (P) UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED.

MADAGASCAR-NORTH: Diego Suarez (sans doute Montagne d'Ambre), *Paulian 734*; — CENTRE : nord d'Andriamena, *Bosser 17850*; forêt d'Andranobe, route d'Andriamena, *Bosser 19858*; Analabe, au N. de Tananarive, *Perrier 18463*; Périnet, *Bosser 17630 & 18975*, *Ursch 166*; Ambatovy, 11 km. N.E. de Moramanga, *Morat 3901*; lac Mantasoa, *Peyrot s.n.* (in spirit); forêt d'Ankeramadinika, Mandraka, *Perrier 18404* (type of *A. imeriniensis*); Mandraka, *Perrier 17293*; Tsinjoarivo, *Perrier 16967*; forêt orientale, près du confluent de l'Onive et du Mangoro, *Perrier 17152*; Ankafana, *Deans Cowan s.n.*; above Ranomafana, N.E. of Fianarantsoa, *Stewart 1090* (K).

Madagascar collections without exact locality data — *Bosser s.n.* (in spirit); *Mason 483* (in spirit, K); *J. Bot. Tananarive 3364*; *Glasnevin s.n.* (type, K).

GRANDE COMORE : Above Boboni, *Stewart 919* (K).

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Royal Botanic Gardens,
Kew, England.